



ACLU of Massachusetts challenges Malden charter school's discriminatory hair policy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Aaron Wolfson, media relations specialist, 617-482-3170 x310, awolfson@aclum.org

The ACLU of Massachusetts filed a complaint with the Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education challenging Mystic Valley Regional Charter School's hair and makeup policy, which discriminates based on race, gender national origin, religion, and disability. The complaint also challenges the disparate implementation of the policy.

"The hair policy in particular is based on white, Christian, and Western norms and makes no exceptions for ethnic, religious or cultural practices, or medical needs," said Sarah Wunsch, deputy legal director for the ACLU of Massachusetts.

The complaint was filed on behalf of students Deanna and Mya Cook, who were disciplined for wearing braids with hair extensions, a hairstyle that is common for Black women. White students have not been equally disciplined for wearing hair extensions or dyed and colored hair, which also violates the school's policy.

"Our complaint seeks a new policy and an immediate halt to disciplinary actions based on the existing policy," said Rahsaan Hall, Racial Justice Program director for the ACLU of Massachusetts. "In 2017, Black girls should not be punished for wearing ethnically appropriate hairstyles that conform with cultural norms and accommodate the nature and texture of their hair. We are proud to file this complaint on behalf of the Cooks and all other female students of color at the school."

For more information about the dispute, go to:

<https://aclum.org/mystic>

To view the complaint, go to:

<https://aclum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/adobe-ocr-redacted-complaint.pdf>

For more information about the ACLU of Massachusetts, go to:

<http://www.aclum.org>

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